



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO **NEWS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2011

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HANTAVIRUS FOUND IN NORTH COUNTY

Use Bleach and Mops to Clean Up After Rodents, Don't Sweep or Vacuum Droppings

Six rodents trapped during routine monitoring in the last week in North County and East County have tested positive for the potentially-deadly hantavirus.

Infected rodents rarely pose a danger to people if they are in the wild and there has been just one non-fatal human case in the county, in 2004. But people can inhale hantavirus by stirring up rodent droppings, then get sick and even die. There is no treatment, vaccine or cure for hantavirus infections, which are deadly in 38 percent of cases.

"People should never sweep up or vacuum rodent droppings or nesting material when they find it," said Jack Miller, director of the County Department of Environmental Health. "Instead, they should ventilate closed areas for at least 30 minutes, and then carefully use bleach or a full-strength disinfectant before removing them."

The best way people can prevent the disease is to keep mice out of houses, garages and sheds by sealing holes larger than the size of a dime, County officials said.

Hantavirus can cause hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS), which begins with flu-like symptoms but can grow into severe breathing difficulties and even death.

The rodents that tested positive during the last week included: two deer mice from Campo; one deer mouse each from Carlsbad and Escondido; one harvest mouse from Oceanside and a vole from Carlsbad. Thirty-nine rodents have tested positive for hantavirus in the county this year, compared to 21 in 2010.

For more information contact the County Department of Environmental Health at (858) 694-2888 or visit <http://www.sdcountry.ca.gov/deh/pests/hantavirus.html>. Watch: ["Hantavirus - The Airborne Menace."](#)

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How to Avoid Exposure to Hantavirus:

- Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.
- Avoid rodent infested areas. Do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with feces and urine.
- Clean up rodent droppings and urine using the wet cleaning method described below.

Use “Wet-Cleaning” Methods To Prevent Inhaling The Virus:

- **DO NOT SWEEP OR VACUUM INFESTED AREAS.**
- Ventilate affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes.
- Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution (2 tablespoons bleach to 1 cup of water), or other full strength disinfectant onto dead rodents, rodent droppings, nests, contaminated traps, and surrounding areas and let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning. Clean with a sponge or a mop.
- Place disinfected rodents and debris into two plastic bags, seal them and discard in the trash.
- Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method. Thoroughly wash your bare hands with soap and water.

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